

# The YELLOW LETTER

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Illustrations  
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## CHAPTER I.

### Into the Maelstrom.

They say that, coming events cast their shadows before, but certainly I had no intimation when I left my office in the afternoon of April twelfth, of the maelstrom of mystery and tragedy into which I was about to plunge. I was worried and anxious, it is true, but only as every young man is who finds himself for the first time deeply in love. There was no portent of evil, no foreshadowing of the terrible chain of events that all but destroyed my belief in my fellow-man, and left its mark so deep upon my memory that I do not believe time ever can wholly efface it.

Even now that it is all ended, and the shadow which hung so heavily over the household of my sweetheart has been dispelled and the hand whose devilish ingenuity brought shame and grief and wreck to so many innocent lives is paying the penalty behind prison bars—even now I shudder at the sight of anything yellow. A scrap of yellow paper vividly recalls—and I fear always will recall—the painful events of the last few weeks.

I had been waiting ever since my return from court for a telephone message that had not come—the word from Louise which I felt would decide my fate. I had written to her the night before, asking if I might go to her in the afternoon to speak on a subject of importance. I knew she would understand the object of my letter, though all that I had asked was that she would telephone me earlier than four whether she would be at home.

From my window I had watched the great hand on the Metropolitan tower clock creep slowly to twelve. As the chimes began to sing the hour of four I felt that I could bear the suspense no longer. Message or no message, I would go to her at once. Before the vibrant note of "On-n-a-n-e" had died away I closed my desk with a bang. As the fourth stroke reverberated I stood with hat and overcoat on, my hand on the knob of my office door, hoping yet to hear my telephone ring. Impatiently I waited a minute and then dashed toward the elevator. The telephone, I learned afterward, rang almost the minute I was out of the room and Louise's voice called frantically for me, but I was not there to hear.

It was only a short walk up Madison avenue to the home of General Farrish, the father of Louise. With the doubt that possesses every lover on such a mission as this, I walked it, now laggingly, as misgivings filled my heart, now quickening my pace as hope routed my fears. As I turned the corner into the street where the Farrish home is situated my steps were laden. What right had I to ask Louise Farrish to be my wife? The daughter of a man worth many millions, a girl of exquisite beauty and of many accomplishments, one who could choose a husband where she willed—what right had I to hope that she would ever consent to become the wife of a struggling young lawyer such as I? To be sure, my family was of the best. With my earnings and the modest little fortune my father had left me I would be able to provide for her. But as yet, though my prospects were bright, I amounted to nothing in my profession. It would be years before I could hope to give my wife the luxuries to which Louise Farrish had been accustomed.

On the other hand, I felt that with Louise as my wife I could do great things. I loved her with a great love. I felt that her affection and companionship would be inspiration enough for any man to conquer the world. I hoped that she loved me. I recalled the trifles which seemed to show, at least, that she found pleasure in my society. I tried to comfort myself, too, by remembering that General Farrish was a self-made man, that when he married he was as poor as I, if not poorer. I knew that he liked me and had confidence in me. Was it then, after all, I asked myself, presuming in me to hope that Louise would listen to me and that her father would consent to her becoming my wife—yet, why had she not telephoned?

As I dragged my hesitating feet across the street I was aroused from my reverie by the rush of an automobile that all but knocked me over. With an angry imprecation at such reckless driving I glanced up and recognized the man who occupied it. He was standing beside his chauffeur, as if ready to leap out. It was Doctor Wilcox, a noted practitioner who

attended the Farrish family, and whom I had met at their home. I plunged forward in anxious dismay as I saw the machine halt before the Farrish door and the doctor jump out and run up the steps.

My first, my only thought, was of Louise. What could have happened? She must be ill—desperately ill, as the doctor's haste suggested. Did not this explain her failure to telephone? Could it be that she was dead? What thoughts flashed through my mind I cannot analyze further. I only know I reached the house but a step behind the doctor. He had hardly passed through the door when I, too, flung myself into the hall and stood there swaying, with not voice enough to ask a question of the white-faced, horror-stricken maid who had answered the doctor's ring.

"Where is she?" I heard the doctor ask as he flung his coat to the maid and started up the stairs. Before she could answer him there were hurried foot steps on the upper landing and Louise peered down, the anxiety in her face lessening at the welcome sight of the doctor.

I gave a silly cry of joy and started up the stairs. Doctor Wilcox was ahead of me, three steps at a time, and, following Louise's silent direction, had disappeared in a room on the second floor, when I, with outstretched arms, approached her. I did not think to ask what had happened or who was ill or what the matter was. My only thought was one of joy that she was alive and well. What mattered if Louise was safe? And the emotion that filled me was still more intensified when she ran to me, and throwing herself into my arms, cried out:

"Oh, Harding, thank God, you've come!"

It was almost the first time she had called me by my name, certainly the first that she ever had given herself to my embrace, and I held her closely, thrilled through at the thought that it was to me she turned in time of trouble. Then, all at once, I was aroused by the opening of the door through which Doctor Wilcox had gone and the appearance of a maid, who ran along the hall.

"What is it? What has happened?" I asked.

"Katharine," moaned Louise, "Katharine—she has killed herself!"

For a moment I was stunned. The first thought that came to me was the impossibility of it. What place had tragedy in this happy, quiet home? Familiar enough, though I was, with deeds of violence, with self-murder as it thrust itself forward in the courts and in the lurid headlines of the newspapers, that such a thing could intrude on the peace of this well-ordered household seemed beyond my comprehension.

"I telephoned to you, but you were not in your office," sobbed Louise, still clinging to me in the abandonment of grief.

"When did you telephone?" I asked, even under such circumstances rejoicing to learn that she had telephoned.

"Just after she did it—I don't know when it was—it seems ages ago. I couldn't get you and—I thought—you



"Oh, Harding, Thank God, You've Come!"

would never come—then—then—I telephoned for the doctor and father."

Just after she did it! I had been trying to make myself believe it must have been an accident, though from Louise's manner I feared the worst. Yet Katharine Farrish was the last person in the world of whom one would think in connection with suicide. A quiet, reserved girl of great strength of character, several years older than Louise, her dignity and her well-considered actions had led me to believe her far less emotional than her younger sister.

"It was an accident, of course," I said, though doubtfully.

"No!" gasped Louise, shuddering anew at the thought of the horror she had just witnessed. "I heard the shot and found her on the divan in her room. The revolver was still in her hand—her own revolver."

For the first time it came to me with sudden vivid force that in the elder sister's life, behind the smiling

mask of reserve she always wore, was hidden some secret sorrow. I understood, now, that far-away look in her eyes. I felt there may have been—there must have been—concealed the knowledge of some mystery that impelled her to this awful deed. Yet little did I suspect whether my efforts to find why Louise's sister had shot herself would lead me. Little did I imagine in what a web of criminal cunning, of baffling crime, of hidden evil, I would find myself.

As I strove to soothe Louise's agitation the doctor appeared at the doorway and imperiously beckoned me. I tried to persuade Louise to wait outside, but she clung to me like a frightened child and insisted on accompanying me into the room.

"Here," said the doctor in the curt tones of authority, "I want you to help me carry her into a quieter place before I operate."

"This way," said Louise, recovering herself as soon as she saw the opportunity to be useful, "into my rooms. They are off the street and much quieter."

I saw the look with which she tried to read the doctor's face and put the question she dared not ask.

"Will she live?"

Doctor Wilcox shook his head gravely.

"She is just alive and that is all. I can not tell yet whether or not we can save her. There must be absolute quiet. I am going to probe for the bullet and see what course it has taken. Please telephone at once for these two men. They are my hospital aides. As soon as they arrive I will operate."

As quickly as we had laid the senseless girl on Louise's bed, I telephoned for Doctor Wilcox's assistants, and was fortunate in being able to reach both immediately. Louise and the maids meanwhile were kept busy by the doctor preparing for the operation, so it fell to my lot to break the news to General Farrish when he arrived. Louise had merely told him over the telephone that Katharine had met with an accident, so he entered the house almost wholly unprepared for the shock my news gave him.

I had before seen strong men in grief, but never had I witnessed such a wave of heartrending agony as swept over the general. He came into his home erect, military, slightly perturbed, but still in manner and bearing the vigorous old soldier, fully master of his emotions. My words that told him as gently as was possible what had happened seemed to sap all his vitality. His face became ashen pale, his lips quivered, great tears coursed down his cheeks, his shoulders bent under the weight of his grief and he tottered as if about to fall.

While he was fond and proud of both his daughters, the elder had always been his favorite. As is often the case with fathers who have no son, Katharine had been both son and daughter to him. Since her mother's death some years ago she had been practically head of the household. It was on her that he relied for everything, and it was with her that he discussed all his business affairs. Such association between them naturally had strengthened the bonds into far more than the ordinary father-and-daughter affection.

"My poor little girl—Katharine—my little Katharine," he moaned in tones of agony that wrung my heart for him.

His first thought was to go to her, but the doctor forbade his presence in the room. I persuaded him to go to his own apartments, leaving him in the hands of his valet and promising to keep him informed as to Katharine's condition.

Deeply as I felt for him, it was of Louise I thought most. I wanted to be with her constantly, to give her the succor of my presence. As soon as Doctor Wilcox's assistants arrived, bringing with them a nurse, Louise and I were both banished from the room. Gently I drew her into a little sitting-room, where, with the door ajar, we waited to see if our aid might be needed. Tearless sorrow now weighed heavily on her.

"Tell me everything," I said, with my arm about her. "Why did she do it?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## That Wooing Ham

Ham, it has always seemed to us, varied more than any other article over which blessings are mumbled in degree of palatableness, fragrance and invitation. The variation is due to the manner of approach. If a person is off his appetite, ham does the best when served as an Arizona breakfast—something else for the man and the ham for the dog.

But supposing you have been hunting, rising early and staying late. You have lost your lunch. You have to trudge home over a hard road. You pass a farmhouse, and from the open door there comes the sound of sizzling ham and the heaven's breath of its perfume. It matters not if that ham sprang from a razorback hog in the wilds of Arkansas, you recognize that the ham is the most glorious flower that grows, the world's desire,

the inn's fountain of Eden, the pillar of fire by night, the sweet influence of the Pleiades and the deliverance from envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness. For the next three miles you can't say a word to your companion because of a watering mouth.—Lockport Journal.

### Believes in Work.

Anne Morgan, daughter of the financier, who does much work among poor girls and others who earn considerable money through their own efforts, advises the girls constantly to save something. Her advice to them always is: "In times of prosperity, prepare for adversity." Miss Morgan, in fact, is a firm believer that every wealthy girl should be equipped to earn her own living should anything occur to take her fortune away.

## BACKACHE IS DISCOURAGING

Until You Get

After The Cause

Nothing more discouraging than a constant backache.

Lame when you awake. Pains pierce you when you bend or lift. It's hard to work, or to rest.

You sleep poorly and next day is the same old story.

That backache indicates bad kidneys and calls for some good kidney remedy.

None so well recommended as Doan's Kidney Pills.

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Mrs. Anna Bussard, 71 Sycamore St., St. Paul, Minn., says: "I suffered terribly from kidney trouble and doctors couldn't help me. I was helpless with pain in my back; couldn't turn in bed. I grew thin and had terrible dizzy spells. Doan's Kidney Pills cured me and today I am in perfect health."

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## Bettis Eye Salve

Quickly Ends Weak, Sore Eyes

## WOMEN AS NATURAL ENEMIES

Writer Advances Some Good Reasons Why This Unfortunate Condition Must Exist.

"The average woman now begins that study of society which will merge ultimately with the marriage campaign. She makes many discoveries which she admits frankly to herself. She comes to many conclusions," says Inez Haynes Gillmore in Harper's Bazar, "which sink unnoticed into her subconscious mind. If marriage, for instance, is her natural career, then men are her natural prey.

"But unfortunately there are never enough men in her world to go round; and of those from whom she may hope to choose some are much more desirable than others. Naturally she prefers the desirable ones—i. e., the 'eligibles.' But—and here she runs against her first obstacle—every other single woman in her circle has come to the same conclusion. From the instant she realizes this she must declare war on every other member of her sex.

"Men must often wonder at that minute and merciless examination to which, on a first meeting, every woman submits every other woman. Men must often marvel at the power of quick observation which women always develop in these circumstances. This is only the swift interrogation with which a warrior surveys the arms of his opponent. Women are forever discovering new and complex weapons in the possession of rivals. And, perhaps, the most terrifying element in the situation is psychological—her sense of bafflement, in that she cannot judge of women for men any more than they can judge of men for her. Every other woman becomes her enemy. To succeed in her world she must play a lone hand and a cut-throat game."

### The Reason.

"Poor Hamlet had a dog's life." "Well, wasn't he a Great Dane?"

Inspiration that comes in bottles is often adulterated with regrets.

### IT'S THE FOOD.

The True Way to Correct Nervous Troubles.

Nervous troubles are more often caused by improper food and indigestion than most people imagine. Even doctors sometimes overlook this fact. A man says:

"Until two years ago waffles and butter with meat and gravy were the main features of my breakfast. Finally dyspepsia came on and I found myself in a bad condition, worse in the morning than any other time. I would have a full, sick feeling in my stomach, with pains in my heart, sides and head.

"At times I would have no appetite, for days, then I would feel ravenous, never satisfied when I did eat and so nervous I felt like shrieking at the top of my voice. I lost flesh badly and hardly knew which way to turn until one day I bought a box of Grape-Nuts food to see if I could eat that. I tried it without telling the doctor, and liked it fine; made me feel as if I had something to eat that was satisfying and still I didn't have that heaviness that I had felt after eating any other food.

"I hadn't drank any coffee then in five weeks. I kept on with the Grape-Nuts and in a month and a half I had gained 15 pounds, could eat almost anything I wanted, didn't feel badly after eating and my nervousness was all gone. It's a pleasure to be well again."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the book, "The Road to Wellville," in page. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A man who appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest. Adv.